

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A device for shuffling cards comprising:
 - a pre-shuffler; and
- 5 a main shuffler, the pre-shuffler comprising:
 - a plurality of compartments for holding groups of playing cards to be shuffled; and
 - 10 an output portion of the pre-shuffler, the output portion delivering one group of cards at a time to an input portion of the main shuffler, the main shuffler for rearranging the order of cards input into the main shuffler and for outputting cards in a substantially random order.
2. The device of Claim 1 wherein the pre-shuffler comprises an input card holder segmented into the compartments, the card holder supporting the cards on their edges.
3. The device of Claim 1 wherein the pre-shuffler comprises an input card holder segmented into the compartments, the card holder being moveable with respect to the input portion of the main shuffler for delivering one group of cards at a time to the input portion of the main shuffler.
4. The device of Claim 3 wherein the input card holder is moved substantially horizontally by a motor drive to position a group of cards with respect to the input portion of the main shuffler.
- 20 5. The device of Claim 1 wherein the pre-shuffler comprises an input card holder segmented into the compartments, wherein a group of cards in the pre-shuffler is positioned with respect to the input portion of the main shuffler for allowing the group of cards to be deposited into the input portion of the main shuffler.
- 25 6. The device of Claim 5 further comprising a platform supporting the input card holder, the platform having an opening, the holder being movable relative to the platform to

allow a group of cards to be moved over the opening so as to fall through the opening and be delivered to the input portion of the main shuffler.

7. The method of Claim 6 wherein the input card holder comprises a rack having teeth, the pre-shuffler further comprising a pinion that engages the rack and is rotated to move 5 the card holder relative to the input portion of the main shuffler.

8. The device of Claim 1 wherein the compartments comprise five or more compartments.

9. The device of Claim 1 wherein the compartments comprise between five and nine compartments.

10 10. The device of Claim 1 wherein each compartment holds at least 52 cards.

11. The device of Claim 1 wherein the input portion of the main shuffler comprises an input tray of the main shuffler.

12. The device of Claim 1 wherein the input portion of the main shuffler comprises an input tray, the main shuffler further comprising rotating rollers for forwarding 15 one card at a time from a top of a group of cards in the input tray to a randomizer.

13. The device of Claim 1 wherein the input portion of the main shuffler comprises an input tray, the main shuffler further comprising rotating rollers for forwarding one card at a time from a top of a group of cards in the input tray to selected card receptacles in a randomizer.

20 14. The device of Claim 13 wherein the main shuffler comprises a plurality of card receptacles, the plurality of card receptacles being moveable relative to the input portion of the main shuffler and an output portion of the main shuffler, the main shuffler comprising a controllable drive for aligning card receptacles in a certain sequence with respect to the input portion of the main shuffler for receiving cards from the input portion, the drive 25 randomly controlling the positioning of the card receptacles with respect to the output portion of the main shuffler, the output portion of the main shuffler receiving one or more cards from a card receptacle aligned with the output portion.

15. The device of Claim 14 wherein the output portion of the main shuffler receives all cards from a card receptacle before the card receptacles are moved to align another card receptacle with the output portion of the main shuffler.

16. A method for shuffling playing cards comprising:

5 loading cards to be shuffled into a plurality of compartments in a pre-shuffler, cards in a compartment forming a group of cards;

delivering one group of cards at a time to an input portion of a main shuffler;

10 after a group of cards is delivered to the input portion of the main shuffler, forwarding cards in the input portion to a randomizing portion of the main shuffler, and

delivering cards forwarded to the randomizer in a substantially random order to an output portion of the main shuffler.

17. The method of Claim 16 wherein the pre-shuffler comprises an input card holder segmented into the compartments, and wherein delivering one group of cards at a time comprises moving the input card holder with respect to the input portion of the main shuffler for delivering one group of cards at a time to the input portion of the main shuffler.

18. The method of Claim 17 wherein the input card holder is moved substantially horizontally by a motor drive to position a group of cards with respect to the input portion of the main shuffler.

20 19. The method of Claim 18 wherein the pre-shuffler comprises a platform supporting the input card holder, the platform having an opening, and wherein delivering one group of cards at a time comprises moving the input card is moved relative to the platform to allow a group of cards to be moved over the opening so as to fall through the opening and be delivered to the input portion of the main shuffler.

25 20. The method of Claim 16 wherein the compartments comprise five or more compartments.

21. The method of Claim 16 wherein each compartment holds at least 52 cards.
22. The method of Claim 16 wherein the input portion of the main shuffler comprises an input tray of the main shuffler.
23. The method of Claim 16 further comprising:
 - 5 rotating rollers for forwarding one card at a time from a top of a group of cards in the input portion of the main shuffler to one of a plurality of card receptacles in the randomizing portion of the main shuffler;
 - aligning card receptacles in a certain sequence with respect to the input portion of the main shuffler for receiving cards from the input portion; and
 - 10 aligning card receptacles containing one or more cards in a certain sequence with respect to the output portion of the main shuffler, the output portion of the main shuffler receiving one or more cards from a card receptacle aligned with the output portion.
24. The method of Claim 23 wherein aligning card receptacles containing one or 15 more cards in a certain sequence with respect to the output portion of the main shuffler comprises aligning card receptacles containing one or more cards in a random sequence with respect to the output portion of the main shuffler.